

## **Report to the Faculty of Arts & Sciences**

### **Committee for Retention, Promotion and Tenure**

From: John C. Poutsma, Chair of RPT for 2016-17

Date: May 16, 2017

Committee members for 2016-17: Lizabeth Allison, Simon Joyce (replacing John Oakley), Leisa Meyer, John C. Poutsma (Chair), Michael Tierney.

Susan Webster served in the Fall but was on Personal leave in the Spring. She was replaced by: Joan Gavalier (five cases), Maryese Fauvel (four cases), Suzanne Raitt (four cases) and Susan Donaldson (three cases). The RPT extends its gratitude to Joan, Maryese, Suzanne, and Susan for agreeing to undertake such a time-consuming task.

This report summarizes the activities of the Committee on Retention, Promotion, and Tenure (RPT) for the academic year of 2016-17. The RPT serves in an advisory capacity to the Dean of Arts & Sciences. It is comprised of six members who are elected by the Faculty of Arts & Sciences and is charged with reviewing recommendations made by departments and programs of that academic unit concerning the retention, tenure, or promotion of members of those departments and/or programs. The committee's recommendations are forwarded to the Dean of Arts & Sciences who then forwards his/her recommendation to the Provost. Retention (interim review) cases usually come to RPT only when a department or program recommends against retention, or the Dean disagrees with the decision of the department/program. No such retention cases were handled by RPT during 2016-17, although a large number of tenure and promotion cases were submitted for review. During such reviews, the maintenance of objectivity is crucial; thus, when a member of the committee had a conflict of interest in the case of a particular candidate – such as being a member of the same department/program – the committee member was replaced for that discussion and decision by a past member of RPT who represented the same academic area, i.e. Area I (humanities), II (social sciences), or III (exact sciences). The RPT expresses its gratitude to Professors Christopher Abelt, David Armstrong, John Charles, Daniel Cristol, Michael Deschenes, Pam Hunt, Susan Peterson, and Robert Pike who agreed to serve as substitutes during the past year.

During the fall of 2016, the committee reviewed fourteen dossiers for tenure, of which one was for a senior hire at the Full Professor level, two were for senior hires at the Associate Professor level, and the remaining eleven were for Assistant Professors. One of these cases was held over to the spring due to procedural issues at the department/program level. The RPT ultimately forwarded twelve unanimous (6-0) positive recommendations and two negative (both 2 in favor and 4 against) recommendations to the Dean, who made similar decisions in all cases. The Provost endorsed all twelve positive recommendations and overruled the Dean in one of the cases with a negative recommendation. Therefore, thirteen candidates received endorsements

from the Board of Visitors and were awarded tenure. The ten Assistant Professors that were awarded tenure were also promoted to Associate Professor.

In the spring of 2017, the committee reviewed fifteen cases for promotion to the rank of Full Professor. The RPT forwarded fourteen unanimous positive recommendations and one negative (1 for and 5 against) recommendation to the Dean. Both the Dean and Provost made similar recommendations in all cases. Fourteen candidates received endorsements from the Board of Visitors and were promoted to the rank of Full Professor.

The RPT also reviewed a dossier from the newly appointed Associate Director of the Thomas Jefferson Laboratory for a Governor's Distinguished CEBAF Professorship. The RPT forwarded a positive recommendation for tenure in this case. The Dean, Provost, and Board of visitors endorsed the candidate, and he was awarded tenure.

Though 2016-17 was marked by improvements in the quality and thoroughness of dossiers assembled and electronically submitted to RPT's Blackboard site for review, RPT still received many incomplete or disorganized dossiers. We had to ask for required information that was missing from the dossier in nearly half of the tenure and promotion cases. The most common omission was an explicit discussion of the second method of teaching evaluation. Many departments use the evaluation of syllabi and course materials as this second method. The RPT recommends that these departments include a section in their Departmental Report that describes the results of such evaluations in detail, particularly in regards to the timing of the review and the members of the review committee. The second most common omission was the inclusion of the Departmental Standards for Promotion and Tenure. The RPT urges each Department to include a copy of their standards in each dossier.

It should be noted that the Dean has submitted a new memo on Retention, Promotion and Tenure. Several important procedures have changed and the RPT urges each Department Chair, Program Director, and tenure or promotion candidate to thoroughly read the new procedures before assembling dossiers for 2017-2018.